

Responding to Disaster: The Earthquake in Haiti

Text Study and Action Plan

Length: 60-90 minutes

Materials Needed:

- AJWS Disaster Text Study
- Local Partner List
- 4 Action Steps Article

Opening (based on text study sheet)

On the evening of Tuesday, January 12th 2010, Haiti was hit by a devastating earthquake, measuring 7.0 on the Richter scale, making it the worst in the region in more than 200 years. It struck about ten miles southwest of the capital of Port-au-Prince and has left tens of thousands dead as well as the approximately three million people in need of relief.

As concerned global citizens and as Jews, it is our moral obligation to respond to humanitarian crises. We are going to look at this crisis a combination of ways: through text, through local action, and through exploring what we, as American Jewish teens, can do.

Alternative Opening:

Ask the students what they know about the crisis in Haiti. Encourage people to share how they have learned their information, and correct any mis-information or missing facts. If no one brings it up, you may wish to share the Israeli response to the crisis.

For groups larger than 20 participants, you may wish to divide the group into three, roughly even groups. The groups will rotate through three stations or phases of the program, each lasting approximately 15 minutes. The last 10-15 minutes should be saved for group processing and sharing. If you do not split up, this is the recommended order of activities.

Station 1: Text Study

Distribute the text study sheets. In *chevruta* (pairs), ask participants to study the first block of texts and answer the questions at the bottom. After 5-7 minutes, bring the group together to share some of the insights. Then have the participants return to their partners and study the texts on the back of the page. Save the last 3 minutes for discussing the texts as a group.

Station 2: Local Efforts

Distribute the list of local agencies with which AJWS is partnering. Ask the participants to form steering committees of 4-5 people. If they were in charge of distributing the funds that AJWS received, how would they divide it up? On what basis would they give more or less to any one agency?

Regroup for the last 5 minutes to share the groups' distributions. Rather than having each group share how they distributed it, ask for the answers to these questions:

- On what basis did you decide to which agency to award the funds?
- If you were making an ad campaign around this distribution, do you think certain agencies would be better "poster children" than others? Was this a part of your decision?
- Are there certain needs that you prioritized over others?



Station 3: What can we do?

- *If the participants have already learned about the SPACE spectrum of service (www.justaction.org), you may wish to use that lens to guide this discussion. Rather than starting with distributing the 4-steps article, remind the students of the SPACE acronym and brainstorm actions that would fall under each category. If you have a larger group, you may wish to break into sub-groups to brainstorm. You can have each group post their brainstorming on large papers. As subsequent groups reach this station, they can begin from the brainstorms of the earlier groups.*
- Distribute the article, *4 steps we can take*. Have a participant read it aloud. Ask the participants:
 - What do you think of these 4 steps? Are they things you can do? Do they feel like things that will make a difference? Are there missing categories or large actions?
- Ask the group if there is one person who will stand up and be the lead for each of these action items. (you may want a 5th lead, for “other” efforts, if the group has already identified that they want to do things not on this list)
- Once you have your leaders, have the group self-divide into task-groups. Give each task group 5 minutes to review their effort and strategize next steps.
- Before the groups leave, be sure that each group writes down two things:
 1. The name of everyone in that group
 2. An “I Will” statement from each person (“I will personally donate \$10 to AJWS.” “I will join a support Haiti facebook group and encourage my network of friends to do the same.” “I will text HAITI to 90999 and donate \$10 to the Red Cross.” “I will lobby my federal representative to provide additional aid to Haiti.” etc)

Closing

While you gather everyone back together, take a quick huddle with the task leaders from station 3. As part of the closing, ask each task leader to be ready to stand up and pitch their group’s activity to the entire group. For example, the fundraising task force should encourage everyone in the room to donate funds right now. If appropriate to the setting, they might even pass a collection bucket around during the closing.

Some things you may wish to highlight in the closing:

- Even before the earthquake, Haiti was the most impoverished country in the Western Hemisphere, with a per capita income of just \$3.60 per day. After Hurricane Katrina and the Asian tsunami, the majority of the victims were still living in temporary housing nine months later. We now have an opportunity to establish long-lasting connections in Haiti to improve living conditions far into the future
- Abraham Joshua Heschel taught that “Few are guilty, but all are responsible.” In times of acute need, Jews can turn to the teachings and the values of our tradition to guide our actions. After the devastating earthquake in Haiti, a number of Jewish concepts give voice to our call to action.
- ***Pikuach Nefesh*** – פקוחה נפש – The highest Jewish obligation that overrides almost every other law is **the saving of lives**. If we are in a position to save peoples lives, **we must act**.
- ***Lo Ta’amod Al Dam Rei’echa*** – לא תעמוד על דם רעך – Jews are prohibited against passivity in the face of the suffering of others. **We may not stand by while our neighbor bleeds**.
- ***Pidyon Sh’vuyim*** – פדיון שבויים – When people are trapped and suffering in some way, we are obligated to do everything in our power to help release them. This often applies to kidnapping or prisons, but right now, there are millions of people trapped in a desperate situation.



THE CRISIS IN HAITI

4 THINGS YOU CAN DO TO HELP:

- **DONATE THROUGH THE JEWISH COMMUNITY** Both of these great organizations have the skills and capacity to move quickly and assist people right away. We encourage teens to give personally, to raise funds in their communities, and to ask that their friends, family and social media networks to participate as well.

JDC CAMPAIGN AT WWW.JDC.ORG. The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee is supplying immediate medical aid, equipment, and services to victims of the earthquake through the Medical Corps of the Israel Defense Forces and other relief organizations. They also work with local partners to provide emergency assistance during this initial stage of its disaster response.

text "JDCHAITI" to 85944 to donate \$10 to JDC via mobile phone

AMERICAN JEWISH WORLD SERVICE AT WWW.AJWS.ORG. Particular focus is being placed on aiding populations in the crisis zone that have not already been targeted for large-scale relief, such as poor and rural areas outside Port-au-Prince. AJWS's long-standing partnerships in the region have enabled them to send funding directly to their grantees in hard-hit areas on the ground who have the knowledge and capacity to spend the money effectively where it is most immediately needed.

Text "AJWS" to 25383 to donate \$10 to the Haiti earthquake relief fund

- **REACH OUT TO HAITIANS IN YOUR LOCAL COMMUNITY.** There are over 400,000 Haitians living in the United States. Be a good neighbor in this time of tragedy. Be in touch with your local Jewish Community Relations Council to see if they have contacts with the Haitian community (go to www.jewishpublicaffairs.org and click 'Member Agencies'). Connect with local Churches or immigration and refugee agencies that work with the Haitian population.
- **ADVOCATE FOR US GOVERNMENT RELIEF AID.** Visit www.whitehouse.gov to learn what steps the Federal Government is taking to assist in Haiti. Financial support and emergency supplies from the US are critical at this time. Urge your local Member of Congress or Senator to take a leadership stand on this issue.
- **JOIN THE GROUP ON FACEBOOK.** Learn what teens around the world are doing in response to the crisis. Share ideas, strategies and reactions on what's happening in your local community. Stay on top of the latest developments by joining the Facebook Group "**Support the Victims of the Haiti Earthquake!**"



Profiles of Local Organizations

Donations contributed to AJWS's Haiti Earthquake Relief Fund support the efforts of several extraordinary grassroots organizations which have mobilized to serve the needs of some of the most marginalized victims of the earthquake. These agencies are among AJWS's longstanding grantees in Haiti. They are working around the clock in hard-hit areas beyond the scope of large-scale relief efforts, mostly in poor and rural areas on the margins of Port-au-Prince.

Donations to AJWS for Haiti relief currently support the following efforts:

Fonkoze will provide immediate general relief by establishing an emergency operations center, re-opening community banks and providing new loans to borrowers devastated by the earthquake.

KONPAY is gathering and distributing food from regional farmers and coordinating volunteers to provide shelter, medical assistance, food and water in Jacmel, a region south of Port-au-Prince.

Mouvman Peyizan Rankit (MPR) is coordinating emergency relief efforts and assisting with emergency replanting to prevent famine following the disaster.

Mouvman Peyizan Bayone 2eme Section Communale des Gonaives is coordinating relief efforts and providing emergency health services including education about hygiene and disease prevention.

Oganizasyon Gwoupman Peyizan pou Devlopman 8eme Seksyon Kominal Akaye is coordinating relief efforts and providing emergency health services including education about hygiene and disease prevention.

Movimiento de Mujeres Dominico Haitiana (MUDHA) is sending aid from the neighboring Haitian-Dominican community in the Dominican Republic, focusing primarily on the needs of women that are not normally met by humanitarian aid: feminine hygiene products, undergarments and diapers. MUDHA will also conduct a needs assessment analysis of affected communities and will conduct community workshops to plan for reconstruction efforts.

Your task:

You are now the AJWS distribution committee. You have \$100,000 to distribute to these agencies. You have a policy that, in order to enable large-scale efforts, you do not distribute less than \$25,000 to any one agency. How will you distribute the funds?